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ABSTRACT

The relationship between field-dependence and cultural biases towards control and discipline practices was explored. It was hypothesized that the strict control practices described for the Cuban culture would foster greater field-dependence in their adolescents than would the practice of a U. S. born group. Seventy-two Cuban and U. S. born adolescents were tested for field-dependence-independence (FDI) and locus of control. Analyses of variance revealed no differences in locus of control; however, there were significant main effects for sex and culture in FDI. U. S. males were most field-independent followed by U.S. females, Cuban males and females. (Author)

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Field-Independence: A Function of Sex and Socialization in Cuban and American Adolescents

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The cognitive styles of field-dependence and field-independence represent self-consistent, adapative ways of organizing and experiencing the environment. The field-dependent (FD) individual is characterized by unarticulated responses elicited by the more salient aspects of stimuli and by environmental control of his responses. The field-independent (FI) person is characterized by responses which reflect active analysis of stimuli; he tends to respond to parts of stimuli rather than to whole configurations. The tendency to be perceptually independent of the field has been related to emotional independence in childhood (Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough, & Karp, 1962). Further the dimension of field-dependence-independence correlates significantly with numerous personality dimensions, intellectual abilities, and even cultural differences (Witkin, et al.,1973)Sex differences have been very consistent, females tending to be field-dependent relative to males across age (Witkin, 1965). The possibility that sex differences have physiological origin was raised by Broverman (1968); however, available cross cultural studies of FDI indicate that sex differences can be moderated by cultural biases in socialization patterns (Witkin, 1967). For example, cultures facilitating autonomy and self-reliance in both sexes have been shown to be characterized by more field-independence, in general, and by fewer sex differences (Barry, 1966; MacArthur, 1967; Witkin, 1967). Those encouraging passivity and dependence in autocratic settings are characterized by a higher incidence of field-dependence. Females in such cultures typically have been found to be more passive, externally controlled and field-dependent than males who assume the more active controlling roles (Witkin, 1967).

The Cuban population residing in the U.S.A. has been described by the U.S. Department of HEW (1967) as authoritarian in nature with control seated in the male heads of families. Females were described as lacking confidence and independence. Such Spanish-derived populations have not been studied with respect to field-dependence and would provide an important contrast to the Eskimo culture studied by Berry (1966) and MacArthur (1967) with reference to socialization of sex roles. Further, it would appear that the Cuban socialization process would encourage children to attribute control to external sources; the relation of locus of control and field-dependence should be strong in the Cuban culture. Lifshita (1973) found a positive relationship between internal locus of control in Kubbutzim children and the degree to which they were given freedom and responsibility.

It was hypothesized that Cubans would be relatively less field-independent while perceiving themselves as more externally controlled than Americans of Northern European derivation because of the more autocratic socialization process of the Cuban culture. Males of each culture were expected to be relatively more FI than females of their culture; Cuban females were expected to be most FD, U.S. born males, most FI. Further, differences in attribution of control were expected; Cubans were expected to assign locus of control to external sources to a greater extent than U.S. born.

Method

Subjects

Thirty six Cuban adolescents, half male and half female were compared with a similar group of American white adolescents born in the U.S.A. The Cubans were born in Cuba but were of Spanish origin. Most of the parents of the Cuban adolescents had immigrated to New Jersey during the nineteen-fifties. The Cuban and U.S. born Whites were of similar socioeconomic background and attended the same inner-city high school in New Jersey. All

subjects were between 16 and 20 years of age with 18 as the modal age.

Procedure

The Hidden Figures Test III (Jackson, Messick, & Myers, 1964) and the Draw-A-Person Test (Witkin, et al.,1962) were used to assess field-independence. A Mirror Drawing Test (Pascual-Leone, 1972) has been reported to reflect the field-dependent ability to allow one's perceptual-motor performance to be guided appropriately by the field (reflection in the mirror). This mirror drawing test, involving the tracing of a six pointed star, was used as an additional indicator of field-dependence; but it was considered an experimental instrument. Rotter's (1966) test of Internal-external Control was administered to determine differences in attribution of control. An interview involving structured questions eliciting information about control and socialization practices was conducted with each subject. Table 1 illustrates all questions in the Parent Control Questionnaire. A female Cuban adult gave instructions for all tests and interviews in the Spanish and/or English language. As a minimal control of intelligence, since school records were not available, the Figural Intersection Test was administered. It is a non-verbal test of spacial analysis reportedly free from the influence of field-dependence-independence (Pascual-Leone, 1972). It does not depend on knowledge of cultural artifacts or language skills, (Britain, 1973).

Results and Conclusions

Analysis of questions from interviews is summarized in Table 1. The ANOVA on total scores on the Parent Control Questionnaire indicated that Cuban parents were perceived by their adolescents as more authoritarian when compared with U.S. parents as perceived by U.S. adolescents (F [1,68] = 29.15, $p < .01$). The means from the significant main effect for sex (F [1,68] = 14.88 $p < .01$). indicate that girls tended to perceive parental punishment as more harsh than boys within their own culture. However, Cuban girls report the most severe control. Despite these differences, there was only a nonsignificant tendency

for Cubans to attribute more control on the Rotter rest to external sources (F [1,68] = 2.81, $p < .10$) than U.S. born. The Rotter scale may not be particularly sensitive to adolescents' feelings about parental control.

Insert Table 1 about here

ANOVA revealed significant differences on the Hidden Figures Test between cultures (F [1,68] = 16.82, $p < .01$), and sexes (F [1,68] = 6.32, $p < .05$). U.S. males were most field-independent followed by U.S. females, Cuban males and females. Cubans performed better on the Mirror drawing task than U.S. born (F [1,68] = 3-.34, $p < .01$). This skill is characteristic of field-dependence. Girls tended to have better mirror drawing performances (F [1,68] = 3.16, $p < .10$). The Draw-A-Person Test did not differentiate the groups according to the Witkin, et al., (1962) criteria perhaps because of the unexpected outstanding drawing abilities of many of the Cuban adolescents. There were also no differences in performance on the Figural Intersection Test indicating no differences in non-verbal spacial ability. These results are summarized in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

In conclusion, the findings support the hypothesis that the Cuban socialization process does not facilitate field-independence. It is important to note that males of both cultures were aware of differential socialization of the sexes and that sex differences in field-dependence were no larger in the Cuban sample. Females were consistently seen by males as being more subject to parental control than were the males. However, females did not report awareness of this "double standard." Sex role socialization may be as differential in one culture as the other but the degree of general control may vary. Differences in field-dependence between these cultural groups may be more a function of degree of general control than differential control and socialization of the sexes.

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FOOTNOTES

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TABLE 1

Parental Control Questionnaire:
Cuban and U.S. Adolescents' Responses
(Percent Answering Yes)

		Cuban		U.S.	
		M	F	M	F
1.	Are you allowed to stay out past 1 A.M. on weekend nights?	83	0	94	44
2.	Are you allowed to date?	94	16	100	88
3.	Are you allowed to smoke?	77	16	77	66
4.	Are you allowed to date on weekday nights?	88	27	100	83
5.	Are you allowed to stay out past 11 P.M. on weekday nights?	88	16	94	55
6.	Do you consider your parents permissive?	88	66	77	72
7.	While in junior high school, were you allowed to babysit whenever you wanted to?	61	61	72	61
8.	Are you allowed to borrow the family car?	77	88	83	61
9.	If marijuna were legalized tomorrow, would your parents allow you to smoke?	11	5	5	22
10.	Were you allowed to spend the night at friends' houses in junior high school?	66	38	77	77
11.	Do your parents have a say in whom your friends are?	50	72	22	27
12.	Are you expected to attand church on Sundays?	22	55	5	33
13.	Are you allowed only to double date?	55	50	5	33
14.	Have your friends always been allowed to spend the night at your house?	77	55	66	72
15.	Could you keep a pet if you wished?	44	66	83	77
16.	Do your parents have a say on the books you read or the movies you go to?	22	33	11	27
17.	Can you wear your hair as long as you want to?	77	94	88	100
18.	Are you allowed to drink?	61	50	83	61
19.	Do your parents make you do certain chores around the house?	55	50	66	88
20.	Do you consider punishment at your house "harsh"?	16	38	16	16
21.	Are your parents stricter with the girls at home than with the boys?	55	33	50	38
22.	Do your parents mind you dating someone of a different religion?	16	50	16	16
23.	Do your parents mind you dating someone of a different race?	50	50	38	25
24.	Do your parents interfere with the money you earn	16	55	22	22
25.	Do your parents nag you about studying?	66	55	61	33

TABLE 2

TABLE OF MEANS

	CUBAN		U.S. WHITES	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1) HFT	6.83	4.88	10.22	8.11
2) Mirror Drawing	3.55	4.66	2.16	2.27
3) Figure Drawing	2.33	2.44	2.38	2.38
4) Interview	9.05	13.50	6.16	8.94
5) Rotter	10.83	11.38	8.55	10.61
6) Figural Intersection	22.00	26.91	21.64	24.42

HFT; High Score indicates FI.

Mirror: High Score indicates FD

Drawing: High Score indicates FD

Interview: High Score indicates perception of autocratic socialization process.

Rotter: High Score indicates control attributed to external sources.

Figural: High Score indicates spacial ability.